

Five Introductory Comprehension Response Activities for Retelling and Summarizing

Possible Guided Writing Responses

① Retelling using B-M-E

Beginning-Middle-End (B-M-E): Students write three paragraphs summarizing important events that occurred at the beginning (paragraph 1), middle (paragraph 2), and end (paragraph 3) of the story.

If students have trouble recalling events from the story, prompt them to use their sticky notes or an illustration from the book.

② Summarizing with a Five-Finger Retell

Five-Finger Retell: Students use the five-finger-retell to write three paragraphs about the story. Paragraph one includes the characters (thumb), setting (index finger), and problem (tail finger). Paragraph two describes the two major events (ring finger) that led to solving the problem. Paragraph three includes the solution to the problem and other events that happened at the end (little finger) of the story. (See Five-Finger Retell, page 172.)

③ Summarizing using S-W-B-S

Somebody-Wanted-But-So (Macon, Bewell, & Vogt, 1991):
Students can use the S-W-B-S framework to write their own summary of the story. This should be written in sentence form.

Somebody: Who is the story about?

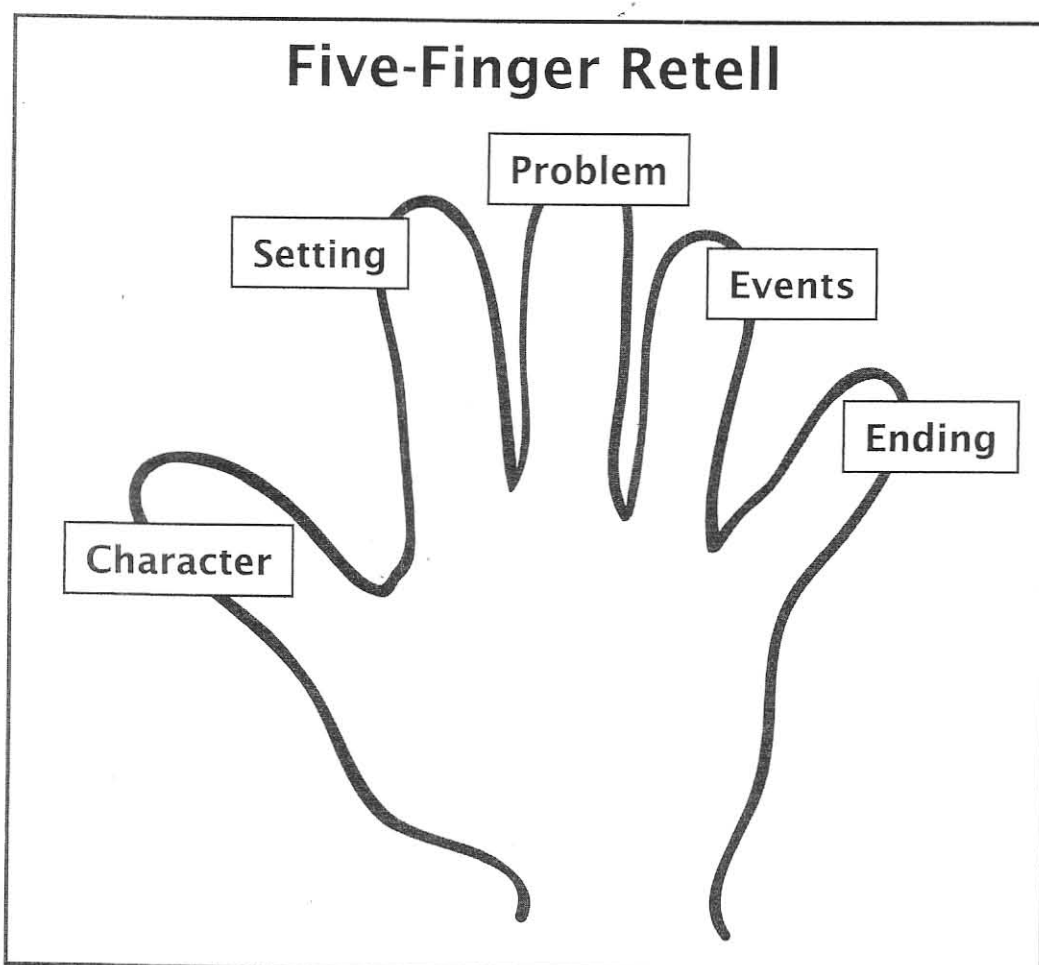
Wanted: What did this character want?

But: But what happened?

So: So how did it end? What happened next?

Example of a S-W-B-S: *Jack and Emilio wanted to go surfing, but a shark attacked Jack, so Emilio saved his life.*

Component	Explanations of Procedures
<p>4</p> <p>Retelling using events and details</p>	<p>Events and Details</p> <p>Students identify an event in the story and write a paragraph that includes several details related to that event. You could have one student write an event-detail paragraph for the beginning of the story, another write about the end, and the others could write about the middle. The students sequence their paragraphs to create a retelling of the story.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Describing a character's feelings</p>	<p>Problem/Feelings and Solution/Feelings</p> <p>Students write a short paragraph describing the problem, the character's feelings at that point in the story, the solution to the problem, and the character's feelings at the end of the story.</p>



Students can complete this chart in their reading notebooks to identify new words, create a kid-friendly definition, and share the strategies they used for determining the meaning of the word.

Page	New word	My definition	Strategies I used
6	undergrowth	bushes or short plants	2 (pictures) & 3 (known part)
8	commence	begin	1 (context)

Comprehension Scaffolds for Guided Reading

The following pages contain scaffolding steps for teaching a variety of comprehension strategies. Use your assessments to determine which strategies you need to teach and in what order. Many of the strategies have scaffolding cards students can use to help themselves apply it. The goal for every strategy is that the students will internalize the process and be able to apply it independently to construct meaning on any text.

Literal, Interpretive, and Evaluative Comprehension Scaffolds

A useful way to discriminate among comprehension strategies is to classify them as requiring literal, interpretive, or evaluative thinking (Stead, 2006). **Literal** comprehension requires students to recall information that is explicitly stated in the text. When readers make an inference or draw a conclusion, they are using **interpretive** comprehension. **Evaluative** responses challenge the reader to make judgments, form an opinion, or weigh evidence from the text that either supports or opposes a position. When readers engage in evaluative comprehension, they bring personal experiences to the process. Teach a strategy at the literal level before moving to the interpretive or evaluative.

Visualize

Good readers create mental images as they read. Visualization helps the reader remember and understand what was read. This strategy can be used with fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.

Fiction

Students read a portion of the text and sketch what they are seeing in their head. If students are having difficulty with this strategy, try the following prompts:

- * *What are you seeing in your mind?*
- * *Draw the character's face. How is he or she feeling now?*

“...creating vivid images during reading correlates highly with overall comprehension.”

Keene & Zimmermann (1997),
Mosaic of Thought, p. 129

Nonfiction

Instruct students to read a section, close their book, and illustrate what they just read. With nonfiction, visualization may take the form of a diagram with labels. For example, if the students read a text about the parts of a volcano, they could close their book and draw a volcano, labeling its parts.

Poetry

Poems are usually rich with imagery, so visualization is a great strategy to use with poetry. Students should read and illustrate each stanza in a poem. You are then able to evaluate student understanding through each student's drawing.

Instructional Scaffolds

Visualization can be taught at the literal, interpretive, or evaluative levels. Always begin with the literal level and increase the challenge as appropriate.

Literal Level—Be the Illustrator: Students draw a picture or diagram that explains some idea *stated* in the text. If the text already has pictures, cover them with a large sticky note. As students read, they stop and sketch their mental images on the sticky note. Remind students that illustrators try to capture the most important information in their illustrations.

Interpretive Level: Students draw a picture or diagram that explains some idea *not stated* in the text, one that must be inferred. For fiction, you might ask students to sketch what a character might be thinking. For nonfiction, you could have students sketch an idea they must interpret from the text, diagram, or chart.

Evaluative Level: Students draw a picture or diagram that illustrates their *opinion* about the text. After reading, they have the opportunity to explain and defend their ideas to the group.

For Advanced Readers: Visualization is an appropriate strategy to use with advanced readers, especially when they read informational texts that challenge them. Give students a magazine or newspaper article and ask them to create a drawing that demonstrates how important elements in the text are related. They might use a flow chart to illustrate environmental issues or a concept map to show the two sides of an argument, the sequence of a battle, or the causes of political tensions.

Predict, Support, and Confirm

The prediction cycle begins when readers anticipate what they will read in the text. Good readers monitor their comprehension, gather evidence to support their predictions and, when necessary, abandon earlier predictions and make new ones. Proficient readers constantly move through this prediction cycle.

Readers make predictions using information from the text and their prior knowledge. If students have trouble making predictions, they either don't understand what they read or they lack background experiences that relate to the story. When reading nonfiction, prediction plays a slightly different role. Rather than predicting what will happen next, students should use text headings, illustrations, and features such as maps, captions, and tables to make logical predictions about what they will learn in the next section.

Because this strategy has been taught since kindergarten, most intermediate students are good at making predictions. Some, however, may need more instruction. They may hesitate to share their predictions because they are afraid they will be wrong. Although predictions do not need to be accurate, they need to be logical.

Literal Level (fiction):

Write one or two predictions.

Mark a place in the text where the author expects the reader to make a prediction. It is best to paperclip this page to the back of the book so the students resist the urge to read ahead. Be sure to emphasize that predictions do not have to be "right," but that they should be logical and supported in the text. One way to encourage risk is to ask students

“Predicting involves readers in books because they feel compelled to read on and confirm their hunches.”

Laura Robb (2000), *Teaching Reading in Middle School*, p. 119

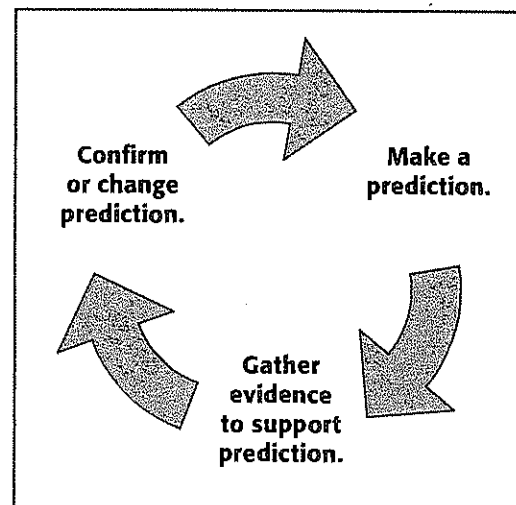


Fig. 6-1, prediction cycle

to write two predictions. During the discussion, students share one of their predictions and tell "why" they thought that might happen. Praise students for making predictions, especially those that are logical but are not confirmed in the text. Explain that good writers often lead their readers one way and surprise them with an outcome they did not expect.

Interpretive Level (fiction): Predict and Support

Again, mark a place where you want students to write a prediction. To make the discussion interesting, you may have students write predictions in different places rather than on the same page. Have students construct the following two-column chart in their reading notebooks. In the first column they write their predictions, and in the second they write evidence from the text that supports their predictions ("I think this will happen because . . .").

Prediction	Support

Evaluative Level (fiction): Predict, Support, and Confirm or Change

Students replicate the following three-column chart in their reading notebooks.

Prediction	Support	Confirmed (✓) Changed (Δ)

After students complete columns one and two, they read on until they either confirm their prediction by putting a check mark in column three (✓) or decide to change their prediction by putting a delta (Δ). Value all logical predictions and especially praise the student for changing a prediction. You will notice children eagerly making predictions and no longer concerned about predicting exactly what is in the text.

Instructional Scaffolds for Nonfiction

Students preview the text and share words they think are important. The teacher writes these words on a whiteboard. Students use the words to write their own predictions. For example, if they are preparing to read a text about earthquakes, they may write, "I

think I will learn that scientists are able to predict where earthquakes will occur and how strong they will be." During and after reading, students underline the ideas from their predictions that were confirmed in the text and add new information they did not predict.

For Advanced Readers: Students preview the text and record key words or ideas in their notebooks. Students use these ideas to write a few questions. During and after reading, students answer their own questions and share the questions not answered in the text. The unanswered questions could be assigned as research.

Make Connections

When readers make connections, they enhance their comprehension as long as they do not "bird walk," or get carried away with their connections and fail to realize their thinking is leading them away from the text rather than deeper into it. Expect fluent readers to analyze their connections to determine how the connection helped them understand the text.

Literal Level (fiction or nonfiction)

STEP 1: Insert a sticky note where students should be able to make a connection. Students write their connection on the sticky note. Accept any connection the students make. If children have trouble making a connection, prompt by saying, "Does this remind you of something you have done?" or "Can you remember a time when you felt the same as this character?"

If students have difficulty making connections, it is usually because they have not shared the same experiences. I once worked with a boy who was reading a story about flying a kite. He couldn't make a connection because he had never flown a kite. I asked him if he had ever flown a paper airplane. He smiled at me and was able to use his paper airplane experience to make a connection to how the character in the story felt when he was successful in getting his kite to fly.

STEP 2: Do not flag the text for the students. Students should mark the place where they make a connection and record the page number and connection on a chart in their reading notebooks.

"In fact, deep comprehension is greatly impaired—if not impossible—if the reader is unable to construct mental bridges between the author's message and the reader's experiences."

Dorn et al. (2005), Teaching for Deep Comprehension, p. 9

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Scaffold #1 (literal level)

Page #	Connection: This reminds me of . . .

Interpretive Level (fiction or nonfiction)

As students read, they record their connections in their reading notebook and classify the connection as one of the following:

- * **Text-to-Self (T-S)** reminds the reader of an experience he or she has had.
- * **Text-to-Text (T-T)** reminds the reader of another text he or she has read.
- * **Text-to-World (T-W)** reminds the reader of knowledge he or she has about the subject through movies, videos, conversations, experience, classroom instruction, etc. (Keene, 1997)

Scaffold #2 (interpretive level)

Page #	My connection	Type T-S, T-T, T-W

Evaluative Level (fiction or nonfiction)

Students now evaluate their connections and share how the connection helped them understand the story. Connections should enhance comprehension and not distract the reader. For example, a book about saving whales might remind them of the movie *Free Willy*. That is a connection that will likely enhance their understanding. However, if they start to think about the popcorn they had when they watched the movie, they are straying from the text.

Connections commonly help a reader visualize. For example, if I am reading a text about Washington, D.C., I'll immediately make connections to the monuments I have visited and the traffic I have experienced. I'll be able to visualize the scene. Connections also help readers understand how a character feels. If the story has a character who is embarrassed about being chubby, I would connect to the character's feelings because I was chubby as a child. A third way connections enhance comprehension is through prediction. As I am reading historical fiction, I make connections that help me predict upcoming events. Also, I may predict how a romance novel might end because the story

reminds me of other novels I have read with similar story lines.

Scaffold #3 (evaluative level)

Page #	My Connection	How it enhanced my understanding:
		Visualize (V)
		Predict (P)
		Understand character's feelings (F)

For Advanced Readers: Ask students to make four columns in their notebooks. In the first they write the page where they made a connection. In the second, they write their connection. In the third, they should code their connection (T-S, T-T, or T-W). In the last column they reflect on their connection and write how it enhanced their comprehension.

Scaffold #4 (for advanced readers)

Page #	My connection	Type	How it enhanced my understanding:
		T-S, T-T,	Visualize (V),
		T-W	Predict (P)
			Understand character's Feelings (F)

Ask Questions

Questioning is a critical comprehension strategy that helps readers construct and extend meaning. It is one of the most powerful strategies students can learn, and one of the easiest for you to teach. Questions can be asked and answered before, during, and after guided reading. Before students read, they can ask questions as they preview the text. During guided reading, students jot down their questions to clarify and extend their comprehension. After they read, students share their questions with their group and call on other group members to answer them.

All the following scaffolds can be used with either fiction or nonfiction, but it is best to introduce this strategy with fiction. Some of the ideas have been adapted from the Question-Answer-Response questions developed by Raphael (1982). By classifying the types of questions as green, yellow, and red, students—even first graders—are able to distinguish between questions that are literal and interpretive. I often use a stop light to explain the differences among the questions.

“A reader with no questions might just as well abandon the book.”

Harvey and Goudvis (2000), *Strategies That Work*, p. 82

Green questions are answered in one place in the book. The reader can go directly to the text and find the answer. Yellow questions require more thought to construct. The answer is still in the text but can't be found in just one place, instead the reader must use several paragraphs or pages to answer the question. Examples of yellow questions are those that ask the reader to compare, contrast, or give examples. Finally, the red questions are interpretive and evaluative. The answers to these questions are not found in the text. The reader uses personal experiences and background knowledge to interpret and infer.

Teachers are used to asking questions. In fact, we are quite good at it. Students, however, are used to answering questions, not asking them. At first, students may be challenged by this strategy, but with guided practice and scaffolding, they will eventually ask and answer their own questions and thereby significantly enhance their comprehension.

Teach the Syntax for Writing a Question

You may have to teach some children how to ask a question, especially if they are learning English as a second language. On a whiteboard, copy a simple sentence from the text. Show the students how to rearrange the words in the sentence to make a question. Then give students some sticky flags and have them mark interesting sentences as they read their guided reading books. After reading, have students share the interesting ideas they flagged and support them as they reword the sentence to ask a question. This is an *oral* task. You are trying to teach the English syntax for asking questions. Most students will not need this step.

Literal Level (fiction or nonfiction)

STEP 1: Turning Facts Into Questions

Use the green question cards (page 215) and the information on the following pages to teach students how to write a question that is answered “right there” in the text. Students make two columns in their notebook, one for “Facts” and one for “Questions.” As students read the text, they write a fact from the story in the first column. Then they turn the fact into a question and write it in the second column. After reading, students close their books and take turns asking their questions and calling on other members of the group to answer them. If no one in the group can answer the question, the children are permitted to look back in the text for the answer. The purpose of this activity is to help children see that asking questions helps them recall information. It is the same procedure we use when studying for an exam. We create questions to prepare for the test.

The text below is from page 11 of *Sounds of the Night* (People's Education).

Night Flyers

Shadow Hunters

Although they may look sweet with their heart-shaped faces, barn owls are some of nature's finest hunters. These owls are experts at grabbing their prey at night. Their bodies are built for hunting. To find their dinner, owls have to have good hearing. In addition, they have to be able to sneak up on their prey. The barn owl can handle this too!

Amazing Owl Ears

Like other birds, owls hear through ears. A bird's ears are made to cut down on wind noise when the bird flies. However, a barn owl's ears are designed especially for hunting. They detect even the faintest sound. They can hear the tiniest mouse squeak half a mile away!

Example of Fact-Question Response:

Fact	Questions
These owls are experts at grabbing their prey at night.	When do barn owls eat?
To find their dinner, owls have to have good hearing.	What do owls use to find their food?

STEP 2: Ask Green Questions (literal)

Students should know how to do Step 1 before you try this step. Students make two columns in their notebooks, one for "Question" and one for "Answer." This time as students read, they stop and write a green question (column 1) that is answered in the text. They no longer need to write the fact. Then they close their books and write the answer to their question (column 2). Requiring students to close their books to write their answer prevents students from copying directly from the text. During the sharing and discussion, children take turns asking their questions to the group. They should first try to answer the question with their books closed. Only allow them to look back in the text if no one can answer the question (or to confirm an answer). You are sending the message that comprehension is understanding what you read, not finding answers.

Green Questions

The answer is found in one place in the text. I can GO directly to the text and find the answer to this kind of question.

Who ... When ...

What ... How ...

Where ...

Example of Green Question - Answer Response

Question (green)	Answer
How do barn owls find their prey?	They use their good sense of hearing.

Red Questions

The question is not answered directly in the text. I must stop and think about the passage and what I know to help me answer this question.

I wonder why . . . Why would . . .
How could . . . What if . . .
What would have happened if . . .

Interpretive Level (fiction or nonfiction)**STEP 3: Ask Red Questions (inferential)**

The answers to these questions are not found in the text. The reader needs to infer the answer using text clues and prior knowledge. As students read, they use the text to ask questions that begin with the words "I wonder why . . ." or "How would . . ." Since the answer is not explicitly stated in the text, there can be more than one logical answer. Guide students to ask questions that *could* be answered using background knowledge and the information in the text. When students share their questions, encourage them to think of more than

one logical answer to the question. At first students only need to write a red question without writing the answer. After spending a couple of days praising students for writing red questions, you should require them to write an answer to their question in their notebooks. Encourage risks by valuing divergent thinking and different answers. Here is an example of Red Question/Answer for the same passage, "Night Flyers."

Question (red)	Answer
Why do barn owls hunt at night?	Student 1: <i>They are nocturnal animals so they sleep during the day.</i> (The answer is not in the text so students must use prior knowledge to make an inference.) Student 2: <i>Maybe the animals they like to eat only come out at night.</i> (This child did not know owls were nocturnal so he made a different inference.)
How are barn owls especially built for hunting?	<i>I think they are good at hunting because they can glide without flapping their wings. Their prey can't hear the owl coming. Plus they have big, sharp claws to grab their food.</i>

Yellow Question

Compare: How are ____ and ____ alike?

Contrast: How are ____ & ____ different?

What were the differences . . . ?

Cause/Effect: What caused . . . ?

What were the effects . . . ?

STEP 4: Ask Yellow Questions (complex)

The yellow questions require the reader to use different portions of text to ask and then answer questions. These questions include cause/effect, compare/contrast, and idea-to-examples. This is a challenging task for most students and should only be introduced when children are proficient at asking green and red questions. Be sure to model *how* to ask these kinds of questions. Then consider the steps you should take to scaffold this strategy. If students have trouble asking cause-and-effect questions, use the scaffolds described later in this chapter for teaching cause-and-effect relationships.

Example of Yellow Question-Answer Response

Question (yellow)	Answer
How are the barn owl's ears different from a bird's ears?	The bird's ears are designed to reduce wind noise, but the owl's ears are designed to hear every sound.

STEP 5: Combine Questions

Once students know how to ask at least two kinds of questions, expand the comprehension process by requiring them to think of different kinds of questions. To increase the challenge, you can include other comprehension strategies you have already taught. By combining strategies you are replicating the reading process of proficient readers. Proficient readers don't solely ask questions as they read; they use a variety of strategies to help them construct meaning.

Ask Green and Red Questions: Students make two columns in their notebooks. As they read, they must think of a green question (column 1) and a red question (column 2). If students finish reading the text before the time is up, they should think of more questions to ask the group. During share time, students can choose one of their questions to ask the group. Before the group answers the question, the students must first decide if it is a red question or a green question. This reinforces the fact that green questions need to be answered with the information in the book and red questions require the reader to think and use background knowledge.

Question-Answer & Connection or Prediction: Using a three-column framework, students write a question (either red, green, or yellow) in column 1, their answer in column 2, and a connection or prediction in column three. You can use this framework in a variety of ways to encourage students to combine asking questions with other reading strategies you have already taught them. Students might write a question, write their answer, and then offer an opinion about the text they read. The chart that follows shows only a few of the possibilities.

Green Question	Answer	Connection/Prediction
Red Question	Answer	Connection/Prediction
Question	Answer	Summary
Question	Answer	Opinion

Evaluative Level (fiction or nonfiction)

At the evaluative level, students use the text to think of a question that asks for an opinion or judgment. Questions might begin with "Why do you think . . . ? Do you agree (or disagree) that . . . ? Do you think it was right for . . . ?"